



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Buffalo District

FACT SHEET

March 2012

Offshore Wind Farm Sitings on the Lower Great Lakes

Location

- Lakes Erie and Ontario, OH and NY, within the Buffalo District (LRB); regulatory matters on Lake Erie within the State of PA and the State of Michigan are the responsibility of the Pittsburgh and Detroit Districts respectively

Congressional Interests

- All LRB Congressionals & Senators

Project Managers

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Current Status – There are no active applications or permits issued for off-shore wind turbines within the Buffalo District. Pre-application discussions/communication have occurred between the Buffalo District and several potential wind developers, including the NY Power Authority (NYPA), the Lake Erie Energy Corporation (LEEDCO) and the Lake Erie Alternative Power, LLC (LEAP). NYPA has since decided not to pursue off-shore wind in the Great Lakes at this time.

Issues - Off shore, utility-scale wind farms have been discussed among agencies and wind power proponents for several years. Initial impressions from these meetings were that Lake Erie, particularly in Ohio, might be the likely location for the first of these projects, due to lake morphology, wind resource, and proximity to large population centers. Permitting issues for the Corps will be complex and include potential impacts to both local and migratory avian/bat species, potential shifts in littoral/wave action processes, difficulties due to ice flows and currents, impacts to air traffic/radar capabilities, acoustic disturbances to aquatic species, potential shipping disruptions and aesthetic concerns for on shore residents. The greatest unknowns currently include potential avian/bat impacts, ice concerns, and potential acoustic impacts to aquatic species.

Path Forward - Upon receipt of a permit application, the Corps will evaluate the activity using standard permit procedures under Section 10 Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 Clean Water Act, including a public notice and agency coordination. Involved agencies will include the US Coast Guard, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), US Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Homeland Security and State resource agencies, among others. Input will also be solicited from the public, as well as other interested parties such as the Great Lakes shipping community, Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, Lake Erie Commission, etc. Currently, it appears that the Corps would serve as the Lead Federal Agency with respect to NEPA, with other agencies in a cooperating status. State agencies will also play an important role, primarily through Coastal Management, Water Quality Certification and Submerged Lands Lease programs. Concerns raised through the public notice process will be fully considered by the Corps, and data deficiencies will need to be addressed prior to reaching a permit decision.

Regional/Interagency Efforts – LRB is currently leading a regional project delivery team (PDT), including all of the Great Lakes Corps Districts, the Lakes and Rivers Division (LRD), the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) and Corps Headquarters. The PDT goals are to stay abreast of potential off shore wind interest and to develop consistent guidelines for the evaluation of applications for off-shore wind developments. The PDT created work groups to address specific aspects of these goals. One work group is tasked to establish specific permit processing procedures, such as public notice distribution (distribution lists and method of communication). The other group is an inter-agency team including Corps and USFWS representatives. This group is charged with establishing guidelines for wildlife studies which will be required to be submitted by wind developers as part of the application process. Both work groups have developed draft documents, which are currently undergoing internal Corps review. Through the PDT, the Buffalo District has initiated discussions with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to understand the effects that turbines can have on long-range radar and to discuss DHS's role in the Corps' permitting process. The Buffalo District with LRD has also met with the USCG to discuss regional coordination efforts.

LRB also participates in monthly teleconferences organized by the Ohio DNR which includes Ohio state agencies, USFWS and USCG. Discussions focus on off-shore wind issues in Ohio.

Background - The Corps has recommended that a smaller, “pilot” project be proposed in order to study turbine impacts. Data from such a project would be very helpful in predicting potential impacts that would result from larger projects. Currently, discussions are underway regarding a proposed pilot project by LEEDCO off the coast of Cleveland (approximately 5-8 turbines). The State of Ohio has signed an option to lease specified acreage for an initial offshore wind project in Lake Erie. In addition, the Corps has had discussions with LEAP, which is proposing up to 1400 turbines placed in the waters of Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania. These discussions included the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Districts, as well as other federal and state resource agencies from Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania.

